

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

An approved SCORP is a requirement of the National Park Service (NPS) in order for a state to maintain five years of eligibility to receive and expend federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies, which can be used at both the state and municipal levels for land acquisition, public outdoor recreational facility development, and planning. Recently, the Maine Legislature has made a SCORP a legislative requirement as well.

This section summarizes the state's use of future LWCF apportionments. A complete discussion of the issues related to these uses of the funds can be found in the body of the document. This section also lists the strategies recommended by the focus groups established to consider five issues of statewide significance: Availability of Outdoor Recreation Resources; Community Outdoor Recreation and Smart Growth; Recreation and Public Access in the Northern Forest; Trail Recreation; Tourism and Public Recreation Areas and Facilities. The section concludes with a listing of additional actions for agency consideration in program development.

1. Land and Water Conservation Fund Priorities

Funding for Acquisition

Current priorities for the Land for Maine's Future Program are driven by legislation and the recommendations of the 1997 report of the Land Acquisitions Priorities Advisory Commission (LAPAC). With present funding close to depletion, the LMF program is reassessing its project scoring system through a second outreach effort currently underway that includes public meetings and meetings with landowners and recreational groups.

It is anticipated that the Maine Legislature will consider new funding for land acquisition that would be sent to referendum in the fall. Passage of new bonding would provide at least five more years of funds to match federal and private acquisition funding sources.

- Because of the legislative interest in and oversight of the LMF program, projects accepted for funding assistance from LMF as determined by the program's criteria should be considered the state's priorities for acquisition and use of Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, at both the state and municipal levels.

The ATV Issue

The Maine Task Force on All-terrain Vehicle Operation, established by Executive Order to address the growing concern about illegal or inappropriate ATV use, will report to the Governor by December 31, 2003.

- Actions recommended by the Task Force that call for additional land acquisition or development of trail resources for ATVs, or statewide trail planning, will be high-priority for LWCF support.

Facility Maintenance

In many cases an aging state park and historic site infrastructure that includes extensive water systems, leach fields and septic systems; miles of roads, parking lots, trails, and buildings, is subject to greater use than ever before and now needs attention.

Bonds, appropriated funds, grants, and other sources of private funding or fund raising should be vigorously pursued to help address the need to maintain a healthy infrastructure. Eligible state park enhancement, renovation, or restoration projects will be a priority for L&WCF matching assistance

Improvements to dispersed recreational facilities on the state's Public Reserved and Nonreserved Public Lands will also make use of LWCF. An intensive management planning effort is underway to update expired management plans and develop new plans for recently-acquired units. It is anticipated that these plans will call for development of remote and semi remote recreation facilities such as hiking trails, campsites and boat launches. Needs for extensive reconstruction of existing facilities will likely be identified through this planning process, as well.

Statewide Planning

To maintain eligibility for L&WCF and meet new legislative reporting requirements, the State must continue to gather information and produce a SCORP at five-year intervals. This effort should include:

- updating the Bureau of Parks and Lands' PARKALL database;
- updating the digitized state maps showing the location and extent of federal, state, local, and non-profit lands available for public recreation;
- assessing the economic impact of state parks, historic sites, and public reserved lands on local and state economies;
- undertaking system-wide planning for lands managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands;
- undertaking a statewide trail plan;

- developing acquisition and facility development priorities for the Maine Rivers restoration Initiative;
- undertaking planning, surveys, and studies related to the five statewide issues that were the subjects of the focus group component, if determined necessary to shape and implement state policy.

Wilderness Recreation Opportunities

The Department of Conservation will identify and manage areas, both within its existing land base and as new public lands are acquired, that will provide additional opportunities for non-motorized recreation in a natural setting, which cover the spectrum from protected corridors for pedestrian trails to large roadless forest tracts, generally inaccessible to motor vehicles.

Community Outdoor Recreation Needs and Smart Growth

As a general matter the equal division of Maine's apportionment of LWCF dollars between state and municipal projects will continue to be the state's policy.

- The Bureau of Parks and Lands will continue to approve municipal LWCF proposals following the Open Project Selection Process. This process has been revised recently to reflect the desirability of municipal smart growth planning and policies, and the priority of restoration of existing projects over new projects.

2. Focus Group Strategies

Availability of Outdoor Recreation Resources

- explore additional incentives for private landowners to keep their lands open to public use, e.g., ways to reduce the liability/cost of damage caused by public recreational use; more responsiveness to landowner complaints by enforcement agencies, user groups, local and statewide organizations;
- seek a new Land For Maine's Future bond issue to provide matching acquisition assistance;
- address the illegal and irresponsible use of all terrain vehicles that is causing environmental damage and threatening continued use of private land;
- intensify the search for lands that can be purchased to provide boating and coastal access, especially in the southern coastal area;
- increase the use of volunteers in state parks and historic sites to address maintenance needs;
- strengthen state agency coordination and cooperation;
- develop management plans for state land facilities with more input and participation from user groups and non-profits;
- increase opportunities for "backcountry", non-motorized recreation;

- Increase the availability of information on recreational opportunities, generally and by specific activity.

Community Outdoor Recreation and Smart Growth

- find a stable, predictable source of funding for the currently unfunded Municipal Recreation Fund to assist municipalities in meeting local recreational needs;
- document the value, tangible and intangible of municipal recreation programs and facilities so communities can make informed decisions about priorities and municipal support can be increased for local initiatives;
- communities should make adequate maintenance of existing facilities a higher priority than development of new facilities;
- communities should express strong support for stateside L&WCF and municipal grants component;
- consider Increasing MOHF and LMF funding for municipal initiatives;
- require provision of non-motorized links to other parts of the community in permitting development;
- publicize models (case histories) of effective implementation of “smart growth” initiatives;
- encourage state agencies to become more involved in regional comprehensive planning, and require local planning to consider regional, multi-community coordination and cooperation;
- integrate Beginning With Habitat (BWH) into local planning and conserve BWH-identified high-value areas that cross town boundaries;
- consider a statewide transfer of development rights (TDR) initiative;
- encourage locating locally-owned open space and recreational facilities adjacent to high-activity areas such as malls to encourage use and limit expansion of dense development;
- establish connecting corridors between public facilities;
- provide safe routes, or public transportation, to and between public facilities, e.g. bike paths/ways, sidewalks, trails;
- ensure that local recreational facilities appeal to entire spectrum of users and uses;
- increase planning for recreation in local comprehensive planning ensuring that facilities/programs will meet needs and be sustained.

Recreation and Public Access in the Northern Forest

- create additional incentives for private landowners to continue to allow traditional public use of their lands, e.g., funding to assist landowner mitigate the costs associated with public use;
- continue to expand landowner relations program(s) to improve communications and cooperation with private groups and agencies;

- continue/increase the use of easements to protect areas of high public value from development and ensure public access, while allowing timber harvesting;
- focus protection on areas of significant public value subject to threat, e.g., from sale of “kingdom” lots, shore land or mountain slope development, important wildlife habitat, development that would lead to introduction of uses incompatible with traditional uses;
- continue funding acquisition with bond issues, partnerships with non-profits, individuals, user groups, federal (Forest Legacy, L&WCF);
- consider management costs of land/easements to be acquired and ensure that management can be met with existing resources, partnerships, or identified new sources of funding, e.g., stewardship endowments;
- consider a variety of mechanisms to fund management;
- increase acreage of state-protected “wilderness:” backcountry, non-motorized recreational opportunities;
- increase acreage of state lands designated as “ecological reserves”;
- establish trail links between “gateway” communities and undeveloped forest areas.

Trail Recreation

- consider establishing a trails coordinator/division in the BPL/DOC who would address many of the needs identified for more and better information, maps, guides, etc.; provide technical assistance for local efforts, training and workshops; help coordinate enforcement and inter agency trail-related activities; equivalent of Off Road Vehicle program;
- balance the availability of single and multiple-use trails (motorized and non-motorized);
- repeat Trails Conference periodically;
- address ATV issue: increase enforcement; create special areas and more trails; encourage club formation; respond to landowner concerns; promote responsible user ethic; increase fees to provide more funds;
- consider tax on outdoor (trail-use-related) equipment (hiking) to create dedicated trail funding;
- make local officials and organizations more aware of Recreational Trail Fund program;
- train and increase use of volunteers;
- encourage/require including trails in local comprehensive planning;
- publicize trails in tourism promotion;
- develop partnership with Healthy Maine;
- don't overlook equestrian trail use;
- consider additional private landowner incentives;
- foster user ethic that recognizes use of private land is a privilege, not a right;

Tourism and Public Recreation Areas and Facilities

- identify and diminish promotion of public recreational activities that are a cause of concern to private landowners whose lands support the activities;
- identify visitor behavior that threatens to lead to loss of access on private land;
- encourage that rules for use of municipal recreation lands be subject to local discussion before adoption;
- do not market activities or lands that cannot withstand the extent of projected use;
- convene an annual meeting of agencies, Tourism Commission, and representative landowners to assess progress in addressing landowner concerns;
- include more input from private sector—landowners, businesses—in planning and marketing decisions;
- increase agency coordination and information sharing in overlapping issues;
- develop and distribute information specific to landowner concerns;
- market areas of the state and activities that are underutilized;
- find ways that resource managers and tourism promoters can improve communication;
- work to increase public support for the benefits of recreational tourism, whose economic contribution helps support resource agency programs;
- continue the work of the Tourism Commission's Committee on Natural Resources, which brings together commission members and resource agency staff to discuss programs and concerns;
- survey tourists' recreational activities, participation rates, and trends.

3. Additional Recommended Actions

These actions were not put forward by the focus groups. They were raised by agency staff, Steering Committee members, and public commenters and provide a list from which agency policy makers may choose those that are most appropriate and feasible.

- Integrate relevant SCORP recommendations into the Bureau's unit management planning process;
- maintain ongoing dialogue and coordination with North Maine Woods, Inc. regarding public access to and recreational use of the NMW management area, particularly in light of changing forest ownership;
- identify agency land holdings that could be further developed to serve the saltwater, freshwater or trail/picnic day park deficiencies of the urban areas in which they are located;
- identify developed parks and historic sites that are frequently used to capacity or overused or are located in regions where improvements/expansion would help meet identified regional needs or reduce overuse by increasing capacity;

- identify and seek funding from the legislature and other sources for the development of facilities on park and other public lands located in regions where improvements would increase public use;
- continue use of the Maine Conservation Corps and similar programs to improve and repair trails on state lands and support program involvement on private lands available to the public;
- continue to develop boat access sites in conformance with the DOC/DIF&W Strategic Plan for Providing Access to Maine Waters for Boating and Fishing, updated in 2000, and the SPO/DMR 2001 Coastal Water Access Priority Areas;
- identify wildlife habitat and continue to acquire title and/or easements to land with important wildlife values that are threatened with conversion to incompatible uses;
- continue to acquire and develop boat access sites statewide, especially in regions with recognized needs, as identified through use studies of existing access sites and/or surveys of users;
- acquire river access sites to the thread of the river or stream;
- continue to target and pursue acquisition of saltwater and freshwater sand beaches to ensure public ownership of those resources to meet identified statewide and regional deficiencies;
- meet Wetland Acquisition Criteria
- continue development of management plans for habitat and ecosystems on public lands;
- annually collect public use data from public and private outdoor recreation areas to monitor use trends;
- Periodically update outdoor recreation participation data, including in-depth data (greater than once-a-year participation) for activities of current interest;
- identify potentially threatened quality areas adjacent to parks and historic sites and methods to protect them;
- support sufficient funding for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to identify and map wildlife habitats according to the Natural Resources Protection Act;
- conduct an analysis of the marine sports fishery to identify resource management/user concerns and develop options to provide programs that address the concerns;
- survey fishermen to determine the demand for walk-in fishing access sites;
- give higher priority to municipal L&WCF grant requests that will create additional parking to meet identified high priority urban area deficiencies;
- promote local use of Maine Conservation Corps services to develop or improve outdoor recreation facilities;
- work with the State Planning Office and the Maine Recreation and Park Association to determine the effect of demand for community recreation facilities on school locations (in the context of Smart Growth);
- provide incentives for multi-town facilities by making multi-town development and/or management a priority for L&WCF grants;

- seek state funding for the Municipal Recreation Fund with the assistance of the Maine Recreation and Park Association.